



# LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

April 22, 2009

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The Honorable Mark Leno  
Member, California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 4061  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 678  
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE ACT**

Dear Senator Leno:

The Little Hoover Commission supports Senate Bill 678, the measure you have co-authored to authorize counties to establish a Community Corrections Performance Incentive Fund to expand community corrections programs and probation services.

In its 2007 report, *Solving California's Corrections Crisis: Time is Running Out*, the Commission found that even though judges have discretion in sentencing low-level offenders to probation, county jail or state prison, their discretion is implicitly limited by the lack of community corrections and probation resources available at the local level.

Lacking local alternatives, many offenders who could be sentenced to county jail, probation or other community-based punishment options are sent to prison. In doing so, the state squanders its most expensive resource on low-level offenders who could be more effectively supervised by local authorities. As a result, prisons are overcrowded, the corrections health care system is under federal receivership and a federal three-judge panel is threatening to order the release of thousands of offenders from prison to bring the state system into constitutional compliance.

In its 2007 study, the Commission found that approximately two-thirds of felons released to parole for the first time from state prison were incarcerated in a state facility for less than a year. These short prison stints do little for public safety, but they do disrupt families and the communities where these offenders come from and return to, and diminish the potential for offenders to get and keep jobs, maintain housing and become law-abiding citizens.

The Commission found that the absence of a seamless and integrated state-local corrections system in California is exacerbated because probation is treated almost solely as a local responsibility. California is one of just two states in which local government is the primary source of money for probation services.

The Commission recommended that the state reallocate resources to assist counties in expanding local capacity for offenders including jail space, drug treatment programs, day reporting centers and other locally-based punishment options. It also recommended that the state reallocate resources to assist counties in expanding intensive probation as an alternative sanction to jail or prison and to enhance crime prevention.

SB 678 addresses the Commission's recommendations by authorizing counties to expand evidence-based community corrections programs and probation services with funding provided by the state through a reallocation of resources. For these reasons, the Commission supports this measure.

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As the bill moves through the legislative process, I will be writing letters on behalf of the Commission to legislators urging aye votes. If you have any questions, or if I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Stuart Drown  
Executive Director

c: Commissioners